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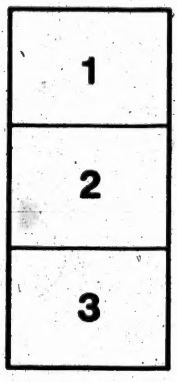

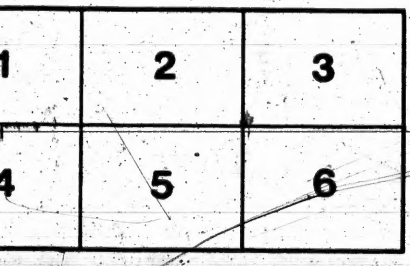

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SHORT REMARKS

BY THE

"VENERABLE BEADLE,"

ARISING OUT OF

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE DIOCESE OF QUEBEC,

BY

G. J. MOUNTAIN, D.D. & D.C.L.,

LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

QUEBEC:
MIDDLETON & DAWSON, PRINTERS, SHAW'S BUILDINGS.

1858.

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SHORT REMARKS

BY THE

"VENERABLE BEADLE."

ON THE

LORD BISHOP'S LETTER.

I have just perused the letter which has been published by the Bishop of Quebec upon "certain recent proceedings connected with the initiation of Synodical action," &c.; "certain interruptions of the peace of the Church," &c., &c. The letter consists of 72 pages, and is, therefore, sufficiently lengthy; it is also, I must acknowledge, a weighty letter, so far at least as heaviness and weight may be considered as identical: but it may, with truth, be said to contain nothing which touches with the point any of the matters in dispute. It is a history, and not an impartial history, of recent events; and contains much praise of certain members of the clergy and of the writer himself. Of his Lordship, *personally*, I have a high opinion. He is a courteous, kind-hearted, learned, gentlemanly man, as well versed in polite literature

as in severer studies. Like the watchman upon the tower, he has been always ready to answer the question, "What tidings of the night?" But I cannot think that his Lordship has been successful in his administration of this Diocese.

It is very natural that Bishops should think highly of Bishops, Priests of Priests, Deacons of Deacons; but is it fair for the Bishop to say that, in the stormy meeting in the National School House,—"the quarrel was all on one side; that *not one* of the clergy forgot himself *once* by the use of any coarse or reproachful terms?" If the above be his Lordship's deliberate opinion, it must be confessed that there are many people who differ from him widely in their ideas of violent and unbecoming behaviour. It is natural, perhaps, that the clergy should think highly of themselves; but it is rather hard to find fault with the laity, who cannot estimate them in a similar ratio. Are we to blame because we cannot think ordinary, uneducated men, of ordinary talents, beings endowed with superior gifts, enshrined in all that mysterious panoply with which Rome invests her priests? One of the doctrines enforced in the "Letter" is, "that what the clergy do is right: if the laity do not agree with them, they are wrong." This statement may be thought strained and exaggerated; but in page 37 are these words: "An attack upon any zeal shewn in the preservation of such principles or practices (such as those of Mr. Roe for instance,) is not an attack upon Mr. A. or Mr. B.; it is simply *an attack upon the Church of England*." The

natural and logical deduction from this statement appears to be—that the clergy can do no wrong; or if it be granted that they can sometimes do wrong, that the laity have no business to think so.

With regard to those lofty views concerning the episcopal office, which have been held by many illustrious men, it would be idle to attempt to speak in the columns of a newspaper. It will be admitted by every impartial person that the greatest names can be ranged on either side of the controversy. I humbly submit that a man may be a sincere Episcopalian, even though he cannot coincide with those lofty views of Episcopacy to which I have alluded, and which are so ably inculcated by Dr. Mountain in his letter. I humbly submit that a man may be a sincere Episcopalian who looks upon Episcopacy as the most convenient and suitable form of church government, not as a divine institution. The early reformers of the Anglican Church, with their usual wisdom, thought it "*unwise to pronounce upon it.*" The Episcopal power is a very different thing in Canada from what it is in England. In Canada the power of the Bishops has hitherto been absolute; in England it has always been checked by Deans and Chapters, and by the law of the land. In England different patrons have a right of presenting to different livings; in Canada the Bishop has constituted himself sole patron, and

"bears, like the Turk, no brother near the throne."

His patronage, it is true, is neither large nor rich, but it is his alone. His power over every clergyman in the diocese is absolute; it is not, it is true,

the power of life and death, but it is the power of bread and meat. He can advance and promote those whom he likes; he can check the progress of those whom he does not like. We all know what are the consequences of this absolute power. Men are put into churches who are so distasteful to congregations, that they empty them in a very moderate space of time; men who have any touch of learning or eloquence are got rid of as soon as possible. I do not know any greater or more insulting slight that could have been passed upon any body of men, than that which was recently passed upon the clergy of this Diocese by the Bishop of Quebec, in the selection of a clergyman to fill the post which had recently been held by Dr. Mackie. In the opinion of the Bishop, Mr. Roe was the fittest person to fill that important post; but, unfortunately, the prejudices of the laity were too strong against that individual to permit the probability of his appointment. Mr. Thompson, Professor of Theology in the University of Lennoxville, was put forward by the Bishop as a candidate for the vacant office.—But when it was found that the Cathedral Vestry refused, unanimously, to pay that gentleman, not another clergyman in the diocese of Quebec, or in all the dioceses of British North America, was thought by those in authority worthy to fill the vacancy.

But we need scarcely be surprised at any vagaries that may be enacted by the authorities that rule the destinies of the Cathedral. So preposterous for instance, are their principles, and so levelling their

tendencies, that (*credite posteri!*) they absolutely make no distinction between the salary which they give to their Evening Lecturer and those which they give to their Verger and Beadle respectively. I do not for a moment wish to impugn, in any way, the two highly-respectable last-named officials; I merely hint that it seems to me unusual to value at the same rate their services and those of a man of education and talent like Dr. Percy.

A portion of the "Letter" consists of an eloquent account of certain old eminent divines, who have held, at some period of their lives, strong opinions concerning the divine origin of Episcopacy. His Lordship asks: "Were Hooker, Hall, Chillingworth, Taylor, Andrews and Beveridge, men of Romanizing tendencies, by anticipation Tractarians or Puseyites?" It is impossible for me, in my limited space, to show by what steps and from what circumstances the church of our early reformers diverged from their rational and manly simplicity, re-assumed histrionic forms and ceremonies which *their* sturdy sense had rejected, and adopted certain peculiar opinions, which, if they had not expressly condemned, they had decidedly discountenanced. His Lordship surely knows that there are always two parties in every church, whether Anglican, Roman, or Presbyterian. In the Anglican Church sometimes one party has had the upper hand, sometimes the other. In the time of Hall, Taylor, Chillingworth, Andrews, Arminianism (identical in many of its features with modern Tractarianism,) flourished in the English Church. So much was

this the case, that a clergyman from a remote parish going up to London asked what the Arminians held, and was wittily and truthfully told that they held all the best livings in England. I could quote passages from the works of some of those writers, whom his Lordship has named, which would astonish and shock people now-a-days. It would be most unjust to judge the feelings, sentiments and expressions of one age by those of another. It would be foolish to attempt to decry the rich imagination, the teeming fancy, the noble eloquence of Taylor, or to underrate the acute logic and profound learning of Chillingworth. But it would be equally foolish not to admit that there are many things in the works of those eminent writers which the present age would by no means be brought to digest. We should not forget that the times which produced the men who held the ultra opinions of Arminianism, were the times in which the great philosopher Locke, the glory and the shame of his University, was expelled from Oxford for doubting the divine right of kings, and for holding the heretical opinion that an educated man can obtain a clearer ground for his faith in the plain unvarnished interpretation of the Bible than when he is assisted by the vagaries and conjectures of learned doctors. The Bishop, with great propriety, urges those to whom he addresses his letter to place implicit confidence in the words of no human teacher. Yet, he says these great men (Hooker, Taylor, &c.,) held these peculiar opinions; why then should those who only do as they did, be accused of Romanizing tendencies? Is such an argument worthy of a

Father of the Church? Can it for a moment be supposed that the revival of forms and ceremonies and sentiments, which have long since fallen into disuse, proceeds from the same feelings and influence *now* that the practice of them did between two and three hundred years ago, when the recollection of them was not entirely obliterated from some minds? Logic of this kind would certainly support many peculiar customs. Eminent men have eaten without forks in former days; why should not people be allowed to eat with their fingers now-a-days? Eminent men were Gymnosophists a long time ago; why then should people be prevented from dispensing with their clothing in the present age? Yet, it is upon logic not more consecutive than this that the "Romanizing tendencies" of Mr. Roe are defended by the Bishop of Quebec. "Were Hooker, Hall, Chillingworth, Taylor, Andrews and Beveridge (demands the Bishop,) men of Romanizing tendencies,—by anticipation Tractarians or Puseyites?" A man may admire the vast learning, the bold and comprehensive intellect of Hooker, the bright imagination, the gorgeous imagery, of Taylor, the depth and acuteness of Chillingworth; but ought he, therefore, to think these great men infallible upon matters of church government? Take the case of Chillingworth, one of those divines so particularly mentioned by his Lordship.—In natural abilities and in acquired learning, Chillingworth has few equals among theological writers. At the age of twenty-eight he became a Roman Catholic, yielding (to use his own words,) not so much to the arguments that there must be some-

where an infallible judge, and that the Church of Rome is the only christian society which either does, or can, pretend to that character. In a few months, however, he became a Protestant again, and built his new creed on the principle that "the Bible is our sole judge, and private reason our sole interpreter." "This principle (says an eminent historian,) he ably maintains in the 'Religion of a Protestant,' a book which, after startling the doctors of Oxford, is still esteemed the most solid defence of the Reformation." A few years after this, we find him declaring that he could not subscribe to the Articles of the Church of England, without subscribing to his own damnation. Yet, a few months after this declaration, he subscribed them as chancellor and prebendary of Sarum. The next phase of his existence is very peculiar; he began to have doubts about the Trinity which he could not satisfy, according to his own ideas, from Scripture or from the early Fathers; and he actually confessed "that the doctrine of Arius is either a truth, or at least not a damnable heresy." There is no positive proof that he ever adopted the belief of the Socinians; a not very well authenticated story, and the popular opinion, represent him as having become, towards the close of his life, philosophically indifferent to all such mysterious questions. If a clergyman of the Church of England refused to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles because Dr. Chillingworth declares that a man who would subscribe to them must be a "madman or an atheist," (his very words,) would he be regarded by those in authority as acting correctly? Yet,

it is by precisely similar arguments that the "Romanizing tendencies" of Mr. Roe are supported by his Lordship. Mr. Roe (says his Lordship,) has every right to believe in the immaculate nature of the Virgin Mary, because Bishop Pearson and Theodore Beza have maintained that opinion. The Bishop might have added a still greater person of the same way of thinking—Origen—one of the most learned, and certainly the man of greatest genius, among the Fathers. Mr. Roe has an undoubted right to hold whatever opinions he pleases; but surely his conduct in promulgating a doctrine, susceptible of the most dangerous misapprehension, for which no authority can be found in Scripture, among a congregation like that of St. Matthew's, ought to be most severely censured. And yet this injudicious priest, instead of being censured, is warmly praised—not for this express action, but for his attempt to substitute "the real system of the Church of England, its distinctive principles and ways," for a "system which is stamped with the characteristics of dissent." This *dissenting* system, (as his Lordship opprobriously styles it,) be it understood, is that one to which the great body of the members of the Anglican Church is attached. After this no one will be astonished to hear that the Fasting Sermon is defended; that the indecencies of Dr. Beaven are declared to be decent; that the innovating conduct of the "clique" is entirely and completely approved of. But it is vain to argue with people who think their simple assertions of greater weight than the sentiments of a whole community. The days have gone by

when the *ipse dixit* of a bishop passed for gospel—when people used to take their religion upon hearsay. Formerly the opinion was that the clergy were the church; now it seems to be very generally concluded that the laity are the church, and the clergy its ministers.

The Bishop seems to think (page 59,) that the University of Lennoxville is not appreciated by the laity of this province, as such a blessing should be appreciated. There have been many grave accusations brought against that University. Of one thing, however, his Lordship and the laity may be satisfied—that the charge of "bringing Greeks into the temple," (page 10,) can never, with justice, be laid upon that learned body. Among the many faults which the alumni of that University possess, a knowledge of Greek certainly cannot be numbered.

His Lordship says that the Church has received a check from the disputes and squabbles which have been going on in the diocese for the last few months. I am at a loss how to reconcile this statement of the Bishop with his Lordship's assertion some years ago—that the Church had not advanced for twenty years before these quarrels began. The reports of intelligent men shew that other Christian bodies have increased considerably within late years. Why then has not the Anglican Church increased in a similar ratio? Simply because any attempt to establish and endow a church has been met with a contemptuous refusal. Not the slightest regard is paid to what may be the interest of

the community in having such a church established. A circumstance, sufficiently strong to condemn any such attempt at endowment, would be that one of the people most forward in promoting the affair, was personally disagreeable to those in authority.—Thus the benefit of the community is sacrificed to private whims and prejudices. It has always puzzled me why such particular stress should be laid upon the endowment and consecration of a church. The service of consecration is comparatively a novel ceremony.—Surely a building is as much consecrated by having service said in it as water in baptism is rendered holy by having the prayers read over it. We allow superstitious prejudices to take too great a hold of us. If those in authority object to consecrate, from some private whim, a building which is to be dedicated to the purposes of religion, we have the right to appeal to our Metropolitan; and from what is known of that prelate's character, we have every reason to hope that our appeal would not be in vain. The public opinion of this community is not much dreaded by those in authority; but the public opinion of the English nation would be a very different thing, and to them we must appear a most tame-spirited and most priest-ridden people. The Bishop tells us that we shall have to give an account for every idle word which we speak or write. May I be pardoned for saying that his Lordship would confer a lasting benefit upon the laity of his diocese if he could impress this maxim upon the young preachers from Lennoxville when they are writing and preaching their sermons.

The Bishop again animadverts upon Lord Macaulay for the picture which he has drawn of the clergy as they were 200 years ago.—Every one, who knows anything about the history of that period, knows that the great historian has understated, not overstated, his admirable representations of a class of men, not, perhaps, utterly defunct as regards the main points of their character even in the present day. Can we suppose that the greatest writers of the last century have drawn incorrect or unnatural representations of the clergy? Can we imagine that such shrewd, accurate and acute observers of life and manners as Dean Swift, Fielding, Goldsmith, &c., &c., would delineate them incorrectly? Have we not all read of Parsons, Adams, Trulliber, Thwackum, &c., and the Vicar of Wakefield, and him who was "passing rich on forty pounds a-year?"

There is a certain class of men who are always ready to come down upon you with texts of scripture, twisted and wrested from the context to suit their own particular purposes. I hope I need not say that I condemn any such practice. In this manner it has been asserted that Bishops should be given to hospitality. That they should not be the entertainers of wealth and fashion, to the exclusion of honest rectitude of character. That they should remember that the incomes which they enjoy should be spent upon their diocese, not upon themselves and families. The great divine of the Analogy enjoyed for some years the princely revenues of the See of Durham. During that period he built and repaired churches, constructed bridges, assist-

ed the incomes of, and kept open house for his clergy, when they came to town. At his death it was found that he had spent his whole income for the benefit of his diocese. The blue books would seem to shew that Bishops are not so liberal now-a-days.

I have been obliged to leave many points of his Lordship's "letter" unnoticed; some I have not even ventured to allude to: for I find it difficult to treat with temper perversions and mis-statements, (however unintentional they may be,) even when they come from a Bishop. However, I have done my best to treat his Lordship with the courtesy of a generous opponent, and have touched with a gentle hand many parts of his pamphlet, which, in common with nine-tenths of the laity of Quebec, I cannot help severely condemning. I would earnestly recommend, before more copies of the "letter" are disseminated throughout the province, that some alteration should be made in the 9th, 10th, and 11th pages of the "letter." The account there given of the June Synodical meeting is so utterly and so glaringly at variance with fact, that it is in every way unworthy of his Lordship. A passage in the tenth page has also been declared to have a blasphemous tendency. Every one will readily acquit the Bishop of any such intention; but the passage is certainly a very singular one, and liable to that kind of misrepresentation. It is as follows: "the utterly groundless imputations cast upon men among them (the Clergy) of most exemplary life and most devoted zeal, parallel only,

both in the temper displayed, and the injustice of the charges, to the cry of old, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth! for it is not fit that he should live.'" I would venture to suggest the propriety of amending and correcting the above passage in the second edition of the "letter." In commenting upon his Lordship's letter, I have endeavored (I hope not unsuccessfully,) to pay every respect to his age and station.—His epistle, it must be admitted, is a most unfortunate production, and can only be compared to the last weapon thrown by Priam :—

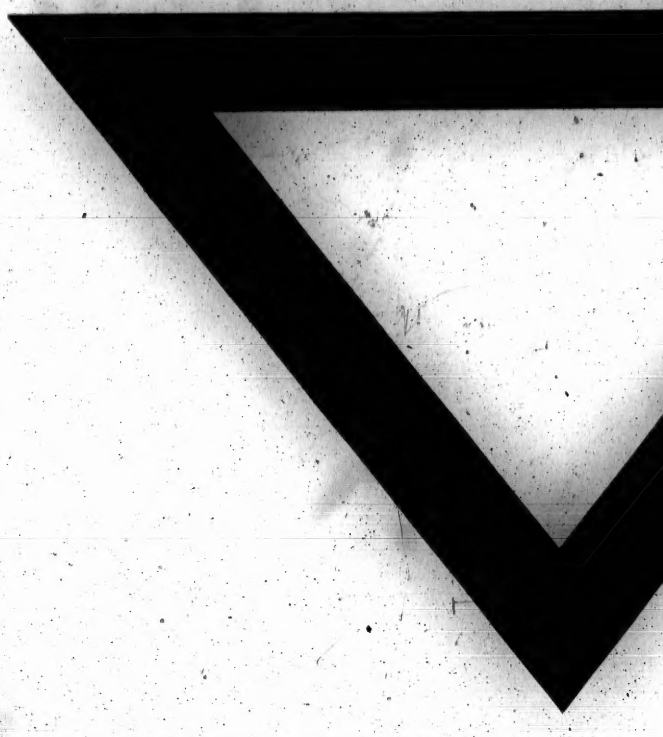
> Sic fatus senior, telumque imbelle sine ictu
> Conjecit : rauco quod protinus ære repulsum,
> Et summo clypei nequicquam umbone pependit.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THE VENERABLE BEADLE.

Quebec, 15th October, 1858.

P. S.—I venture to imitate the practice which has been brought into fashion by my worthy and excellent friend, Dr. Nicolls, Principal of the University of Lennoxville, viz. : the adding of a Postscript by way of after-thought. There seems to be a strange delusion in his Lordship's mind concerning the party which is opposed to the innovating tendencies of certain divines in his diocese. He seems to be under the impression that its numbers are scanty, that its influence is contemptible, that

the party itself is but the shadow of a shade. I have been at pains to examine into this matter, and I find that the party consists of nine-tenths of the members of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Quebec. This party is styled by the Bishop, "the very echo, in wonderful exactness" of the Puritans of the reign of Charles I. I have heard that those old Puritans were famous for naming their children from the Book of Judges, and for applying Holy Scripture to their own peculiar cases. The "letter" contains striking instances of this vicious habit of misapplying scripture, and of the strange lengths to which it may be carried. We have ample evidence in the "letter" that people of the present day do not scruple to compare themselves and others to the Apostles and other holy men in the bible. There is also another delusion of which many people are the victims, and from which the writer of the "letter" is not exempt. He is evidently under the impression that a strong assertion upon his part is equivalent to an established fact. Now, I would not for a moment suppose that he would assert anything which he did not believe to be true. That two and two make four, is an assertion the truth of which no one will deny. But few, I will venture to say, in this diocese, will be found to coincide with the statement that the Protestantism of the "Clique" is the true Protestantism of the Church of England.